

Interview conducted at Lapoint Elementary, 27 February 1987. This tape was made to train sixth-grade students to conduct oral history interviews. The teacher, who is unidentified, as are the students, makes occasional comments to the students. Most of those comments have not been transcribed.

Transcribed by Kathleen Irving, May 2001

Frances McCloud (Frances) is a ninety-year-old woman raised in Cleveland, Ohio. She moved to California later in life.

Interviewers (I) are children in a sixth grade class.

I: Where did you live as a child?

Frances: I can't hear you. I'm so old, I'm getting deaf.

I: Where did you live when you were a little girl?

Frances: In Cleveland, Ohio.

I: Describe the area.

Frances: Well, at that time it was the fourth city in the United States. It was pretty big. It was right on Lake Erie.

I: How did you entertain yourself when you were a kid?

Frances: Well, I tell you, I didn't have much time for much entertainment because I was taking music lessons, but when we were in school we had a lot of fun. At recess we'd go out and play tag and different games, you know. Oh, I'll tell you one thing. I used to read quite a lot. That was entertaining to me.

I: What was it like to go to school in the early 1900s?

Frances: Well, it was lot different than it is today. We didn't have buses. We had to walk. We were in school in the morning at 8:30. We had recess at 10:30 for a half hour and we went home for lunch, we had no restaurants or cafeterias like you do today, and we couldn't take our lunches, we had to go home unless we brought an excuse.

I'll tell you another thing. We had to sit when we got through with our work, with our hands on our desks like that, and listen to the rest of the class. I don't think they do that today, do they?

I: How were children disciplined?

Frances: Oh, we had a principal that had a horsewhip and if they were naughty, the teacher would have nothing to do with them, she'd simply turn them over to the principal. And if they were bad enough, they got horse-whipped.

I: Could you describe the schoolhouse?

Frances: It was a big building, made of brick, two stories high. All the lower grades were on the first floor and the upper grades were on the second floor. It was large. There were 800 pupils when I went to school. We had two first grades, two second grades, two third grades and so on up.

Teacher: It's bigger than our school, but you have to remember, she lived in the city. Tell them about the fire alarm, what you used to do, the fire drills. That's so different than what they experience.

Frances: We never knew when we were going to have a fire drill. It could come any time during the day that we were in school. They'd ring a bell and I played the piano for them to march out. They'd march down the fire escapes from the second floor to the first floor. They had to march, they couldn't run like they were scared to death.

Teacher: Tell them about that school you were telling me about that burned.

Frances: Over in Collinwood. That wasn't very far from where I went to school. It was a wooden building. It was like a country school. Do you remember seeing any pictures of country schools? Well, it was like that, wooden. How the fire started, nobody knew, but they thought it may have started in a closet where the janitor kept his cleaning stuff, you know. There was about, I believe, 400 pupils there. It wasn't as big as where I was, it was smaller school. It caught fire and the doors opened in instead of out, which today is a rule. All new schools that are built, the doors have to open out because the children panicked trying to get out that door and it opened in and they were just piled up on top of one another. Of course there were many of them that burned to death, which was a terrible thing. They panicked, they didn't have fire drills like we did, because it was out in the country. A country school.

I: Why did you play the piano for them to march out?

Frances: They just asked me to because somebody had to play. We didn't run into our schools. We had to march in, and we marched out. I was the only one in school, apparently, that could play the piano. I had to play the piano. I started in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

I: What was the highest grade that your school went to?

Frances: Eighth grade. From the first to the eighth grade, and that's when we got our diplomas to graduate for high school. Now we didn't have what they call Jr. High School. We didn't have that in my time.

I: How has education changed throughout the years?

Frances: I think it has changed for the worse, myself. They don't do things like they did when I went to school today. They pass them along whether they're allowed to pass or not. In my day, they had to take the whole grade over again if they just failed one subject. Today I don't see many schools doing that.

I: Did you ever get in trouble?

Frances: Never. I don't think!

I: What changes have you witnessed in transportation?

Frances: Like cars and airplanes? During my lifetime? What changes have I seen made? Well, let's see... They have the airplane. That was a change from horse and buggies. Automobiles. What else would we have? We've got a new-style railroad train today. The old trains used to be wooden.

I: Wooden?

Frances: Yes, from wood to steel. Too many wrecks, and they'd catch fire, you know.

Teacher: Was that one of the reasons they changed maybe?

Frances: I think so.

Teacher: Why don't you tell them about the first car that you remember.

Frances: The first car, automobile, that we had that I can remember was called a Sandusky Runabout. It was a two-seated car and my father had built—I had a little brother—a seat down by the dashboard so my brother and I could ride. We took a trip to the country with it, way out in the country. As we were chugging along, children would come out from their farms. “Mama, Mama, look at the horseless carriage!” [Laughter] Maybe they'd like to see a picture of the Cadillac that my father and mother had. I found another one that we had, that was our first Cadillac, but we had another one just like it.

That's my brother and I sitting up on the hood. Now *that* was a Cadillac. Do you remember Cadillacs, what they look like today? I'll have to tell you a little bit. There was no top on it and in the back seat there were just two seats where it's rounded out a little bit. It had a back door entrance. If you wanted to put three people back there, there was a little extra seat that would fit between the two, back by the back door. That made you an extra seat in the back.

I: What was it like to ride in the Cadillac back then?

Frances: Oh, it rode along pretty good, just like most other cars. They were built heavy and strong.

I: How long would a Cadillac hold together?

Frances: That I couldn't tell you, dear. Probably several years, only they changed their style every year, you see, just like they do today. That's the way they were built when I was a little girl like you. I wasn't quite that old, I don't think. Most of you are around eleven years old? I think I was probably around seven.

I: How have styles of clothes changed?

Frances: As a little girl I dressed very much like we do today, as a *little* girl. Then when we got into our teens, or about the eighth grade, we wore long dresses and they lasted for quite a while, right up until about 1920, '25, maybe. Long skirts, blouses, long dresses. I've got pictures of that, too. Several of them are in here.

There's a picture of the hats that my mother wore in those days, and the big bows I used to wear at the back of my head, that was quite stylish in those days. Some of these things would be interesting. I wish I hadn't thrown away so many pictures that I had.

I was sixteen when that picture was taken.

I: What changes have you seen in music?

Teacher: What did you listen to when you were a little girl?

Frances: Well, we had what we called popular music. They were popular songs and they were dance music, but I had to learn classical, if you know what classical music is.

I: Approximately what time did TVs come out?

Teacher: When did you see your first television?

Frances: Probably twenty years ago by now.

Teacher: Did they have radio when you were a little girl?

Frances: No, not when I was a little girl. They had radio probably around 1917, '18, '19, somewhere in there.

Teacher: You were telling me a story the other night about the first electric lightbulb that you ever witnessed. Would tell them about that?

Frances: Yes. In the city, in Cleveland, we burned gas, which made our lights. Now you all have seen camp lights, the lanterns with the little white things that light up. Well, that's what we used in the city. We went down to the country, down on the farm, to where my grandmother lived. When evening came, this was the first time I had ever seen this, when evening came, she turned a switch on and here was a string hanging down with a little bulb on it and that was a light. And

that was the first electric I had ever seen. At ten o'clock it got dark and she had to go and light her lamps. They turned all the lights off in the town at ten o'clock at night. That was always interesting to me. Of course, when we got home, my dad wired our house for electric lights.

Teacher: What do you think of that old car, boys? And that was probably brand new, wasn't it?

Frances: Oh, yes. We hadn't had it very long. Two or three of these came down in horse and buggies to this ball game, but my father and this cousin of mine and these two people were with us in the car, crowded in there.

Teacher: So, it was a real family outing.

Frances: Yes.

Teacher: The bathing suits, did they see the bathing suits?

Frances: No, I don't think so.

Teacher: Notice the bathing suits.

Frances: If anyone is interested, this is the way we had to dress, it was a law, we had to dress when we bathed in Lake Erie. Now you all have heard of Lake Erie, surely. That was our bathing suits and look at them today. We even had to wear stockings and shoes.

Teacher: In the water?

Frances: In the water.

Teacher: Why was it a law?

Frances: I don't know, but it was not too bad, because of the footage. It was stony and the shoes came in pretty handy, because some beaches were stony and some beaches were lovely and sandy. But it was a law to wear to stockings and shoes and cover your whole body.

Teacher: She has a picture here of the Spirit of St. Louis.

Frances: No, dear.

Teacher: Isn't it the Spirit of St. Louis, didn't you tell me that?

Frances: No, no. I said the Wright Brothers. It's a sea plane.

Teacher: Oh!

Frances: That's Lake Erie back here, at the beach at Cedar Point, Ohio. That wasn't very far from

Cleveland, about a two-hour ride on the boat.

I: What changes have you witnessed in jobs and the economy?

Frances: Most anything, I guess. I can't tell you that because jobs were very plentiful in those days. There weren't too many women working, mostly men.

Teacher: Why did the women not work?

Frances: Well, it just wasn't customary at that time. They learned to keep house and live under their husbands' earnings, and they kept house and raised their family, cooked, washed and what have you.

Teacher: Of course, to wash then was an all-day job, wasn't it?

Frances: And the wash-day was... Well, I'll tell you. We had a washwoman who came to the house every Monday, an Italian woman. She would wash in the old wash tubs and take the clothes and put them in a boiler on the stove and boil them with a little kerosene and soap, Fellowes Naptha Soap, maybe you've heard of it. They'd cut that up. It was hard stuff, not like we have today. And boil those clothes. And the kerosene oil was supposed to whiten them and it did. It worked. Then they had to be rinsed and put out on the line, outdoors, or in the basement, whatever, the attics, whatever, to dry. Later on, she ironed all those that were dry.

Teacher: Was ironing an all-day job also?

Frances: And we did not have electric irons in those days. We had to heat these irons on the stove and iron with the heat from the stove. There were no electric irons. Now that wasn't like today where they have electric washing machines, electric irons, and it can be done. It was an all-day job.

Teacher: So, really, being a housewife was a full-time job then.

Frances: Absolutely. We worked! My mother worked, really.

I: About how old were you when steamboats came out?

Frances: There were steamboats long before I was born.

I: How do you feel about jobs today?

Frances: I've never given much thought to that. I think the jobs probably are good jobs. The pay is good today. It's a lot more money coming in than there was when I was young.

I: How have prices changed?

Frances: They have changed a great deal, but then wages, too, have gone up. Each year, as wages go up, we people have to pay more for the goods that we buy, because the companies don't want to lose money. They have to pay more for their help, so we have to pay more for produce.

I: How has furniture changed?

Teacher: What was household furniture like? What would you have seen in a house in the early 1900s?

Frances: About the same as we would today. The old furniture, way back when I was a very little girl, that my grandmother would have, would be called antiques today and they were different, they were a different style. But you'll see a lot of those things coming back that represent the old, old styles today.

I: How were they different?

Frances: Take a davenport, for instance. They make them a lot longer today than they did when I was a little girl. They'd be about six feet long. Now you have them at eight feet. You have your rocking chairs upholstered and your straight chairs that match. They had different types of chairs. They used to have straight chairs, just a straight, ordinary chair, maybe a little handle on each side and they wouldn't be upholstered in tapestry. They'd be in what they called mohair and that was kind of the hard stuff. It didn't wear. They had leather, too. They used a lot of leather in those days, more than they do today.

I: What were clocks like back when you were little?

Frances: Well, they were about the same as they always were. They make clocks today that look like the old clocks. I see many clocks today hanging on walls in the schoolroom that look just exactly like this clock that we had in our schoolrooms. Big and round, you know. Of course, they make all kinds of fancy ones today, where they didn't make such fancy ones a few years ago, decorate them up, you know what I mean.

I: How have families changed?

Teacher: You mentioned a while ago about women staying in the home. They have a concern about that. They want to know, because many of their mothers work, what kind of changes have you seen since the early 1900s. How was the family different?

Frances: I have seen a great deal of changes. Many, many women are working and they have babysitters taking care of their children. Those who don't have children, of course, they wouldn't have to have a babysitter.

Teacher: Describe how a woman would dress to go out in public.

Frances: Usually, as I say, many of them would wear suits, skirts, if they were going out. Or a

plain dress, possibly. Or if they were going out for an evening party or something like that, they would put on a pretty party dress, or formals.

Teacher: They want to know about the airplane you saw, this picture right here.

Frances: That is a seaplane and this was one of the first at Cedar Point. I'd gone up there on a picnic at one time and this was down on the beach on Lake Erie, and that's all back in Ohio. This was built by the Wright Brothers, so I was told, and I remembered that, you know. This is called a sea plane. It has no wheels.

I: Did you ever ride in one?

Frances: No, I never got into a plane until I was about seventy years old. My first plane trip. I'd never, never get in a plane. I was afraid.

I: How did they get the plane into the water?

Frances: It was built like a boat. When the picture comes around, you'll see that. It was supposed to be in the water. It flew, but it would land in the water instead of on the ground, like they do today. They would just slide in, you see. I *guess* that's right. I never saw one come in, so I'm not sure about that.

I: How have houses for families changed?

Teacher: Describe the house that you lived in.

Frances: We lived in many. I don't know whether it would be the last house I lived in or... We lived in many houses. My father would build one, then sell it. We'd live there a few months and he'd sell it, and he'd build another one and so on and so forth.

Teacher: So, he was a carpenter?

Frances: No, no. He dabbled a little in real estate, but we always built our own home, except one, and that was when I was five years old. We lived in a big house. When I was born, that would be eighty-nine, almost ninety years ago, my mother lived... Well, I'm off on that. Her home, I will say, it was her home, that she grew up in, was what they called a gingerbread house. It was all kinds of shapes around. And that house is still standing today. It's over one hundred years old. It really was beautiful for those days.

Now today, most homes are bungalows, they don't have two or three or four stories. Most of our places that we had when I was growing up, we had the cellar and we had the first floor and the second floor, which was bedrooms and a bathroom, and our third floor, and an attic. Some people just had the third floor, which they called the attic. They don't build them like that today. They build them mostly on bungalow style, which would be one floor and a lot of them, no basements. Now that would be a change.



I: What were some of the hairstyles like?

Teacher: How did you wear your hair as a teenager or about their age?

Frances: Well, when I was their age, around eleven, I was still wearing curls with a big bow. And then when I was in eighth grade, I put my hair up. I had very long hair, in braids around and then some big bows in the back was the way we wore it. I think I have a picture. Here. Now this one, I think I was about sixth grade in that. That was the style, big bows. That's why I started wearing my hair up, no more curls.

Teacher: What do you mean wore your hair up?

Frances: Well, two braids. I rolled it here on the side into two braids, then take the braids and roll them around your head, like that, then put your bows, either one bow or two bows, one here or one back here.

I: How did school furniture change?

Teacher: They have these real modern desks. Describe the furniture in a classroom.

Frances: Oh, my goodness. We didn't have modern desks. We had modern for our day. We had the chair, like this would be, not a soft one, of course, and it would only hold two children or a teacher, but we never sat with anybody, but the teacher. Then we had in front of us a desk that came over and there would be a little board across here that came up. Over here would be our ink well and down here, underneath, would be where we kept all our books. And believe me, our desks had to be just perfect shape. They could not be messed up in any way. They had to be in perfect shape. We had a monitor that would come around before we left school, or we'd stay after school to clean it out. *Never* any gum.

Teacher: Would you describe for us what an ink well is? I don't think children in this day and age know what an ink well is.

Frances: Well it was a hole in the desk and your bottle of ink would sit down in there and that's what we called the ink well.

Teacher: What did you use it for?

Frances: For writing with ink when we had to do paperwork.

Teacher: There were no ballpoint pens?

Frances: No, no ballpoint pens in those days.

I: Was it hard to learn to write with ink?

Teacher: They have a hard time thinking of writing of ink.

Frances: Oh, because they have the ballpoints today. No, it wasn't hard. We were used to it. It wasn't hard to write with them.

I: Were there any pencils then?

Teacher: He's wondering if the pencils were similar to the ones we use today.

Frances: They were just the same. There were no changes in the pencils that I know of. What we use today is what we used to use; the same thing, with an eraser on the end of them.

I: When you wore your hair up in braids, did you wear two bows or one?

Frances: We used to decorate them when we went to parties and fancy balls, dances and things like that, but not ribbons, we'd use some other kind of thing, maybe a flower or something else in our hair as we had it done.

I: Did you ever ride in a train?

Frances: Oh, I used to ride in them all the time. They were similar to what we have today. Are you talking about freight trains or passenger trains?

I: Passenger.

Frances: Well, in the old days up to maybe 1918, somewhere in there, they made a change. All the coaches were made of wood, but there come a law along, they had to be made of steel. So, today they are steel trains. They are very nice inside. The passengers are comfortable, much better than buses. They have more room in them and if you want to sleep, they have them built now so your back will go down a long ways so you're practically lying down and under here they have a little thing that comes out where you can put your feet up like that. Almost rest beautifully in those trains, today. They are a big improvement over the old ones.

I: What was it like to go to the hardware stores?

Frances: I can't see any difference today, except they may have more things in there. There's just the same today as they were when I was growing up.

Teacher: What kind of things would you find in a hardware store?

Frances: Most anything that you want to find will be in a hardware store, like nails and tacks and things like that, plumbing things; many, many things are in hardware stores that you can use at your home or in your cars. Whatever you get in a hardware store. I can't see any difference today than they were when I was growing up, except they may have more things that they have invented, you'll find in hardware stores.

Teacher: I told them you lived near John D. Rockefeller.

Frances: Oh, yes. We lived for eight years right across from his estate in East Cleveland.

I: Did you ever talk to him?

Frances: I never did, no. But my father was in the dry cleaning business at the time and he would come there every summer to his estate. Now I lived on Fifth Street. Here was Yeargood Avenue and here was Fifth Street and over on this side, on Guilford (?) Avenue, was his big estate in there. And way back, maybe a mile or two back, was his little old home and then he had a big lake back there, a pond really where kids would sneak in there and swim around, when he wasn't home, of course. I have seen him, but I never talked to him. But my father used to do his dry cleaning. My brother had his birthday on the same day, the eighth of July, as John D. Rockefeller's. Of course, do you know who he was?

Teacher: Only what I told them.

Frances: At one time he was considered the richest man in the world. He was the one that owned the Standard Oil Company. I remember now, Linda, you said you thought he was that other one. Huntington was the railroad man.

Teacher: Oh, okay.

Frances: But anyway, getting back to my brother. My brother was deaf and he went up to the gatekeeper, who was named Pat Litch, went up into the estate when Rockefeller was living there through the summer. Rockefeller was noted for handing out dimes, you know, maybe you don't know, but in those days, people thought that was something for him to hand out a bunch of dimes.

Begin side two.

Frances: He never figured it out why he didn't get ten cents from John D. Rockefeller. That's just a little story.

I: Did you make your dresses or did you buy them?

Frances: My mother mostly bought my clothes. She didn't sew, and, of course, I couldn't sew. But I have in later years made a few things for myself, but 'most all of my clothes were bought.

I: What kind of animals did people keep for pets?

Frances: Oh, my, we had pets when we were growing up. My father brought home, in his pocket, a little white mouse, or a rat. That was the first pet that I remember. My brother was kind of mean and on the fourth of July he took his pet and put a firecracker on its tail and set it off. And

the poor little thing died. Of course, it was the scare, probably, from the explosion, and the tail was blown completely off. [Laughter]

We had cats, we had dogs, all through our young lives. We never had a cat and a dog together, but if a cat would come in, we'd have cats, and if my brother or I would come along the street and a little puppy would follow us, or a little kitten, we'd take it home with us. And my mother and dad always let us keep our pets until something happened to them and they'd die or run away or something.

I: What was it like to ride bicycles when they came out?

Teacher: Did you have a bicycle?

Frances: Yes, I had a bicycle.

Teacher: Would you describe it for us?

Frances: It was just exactly the same as it is today. The girls' bicycle doesn't have the bar across. The boys' bicycle has the bar across the top. And we'd go bicycling. Sometimes we'd ride them to school.

I: Were there any sports during that time?

Teacher: What were some of people's favorite sports?

Frances: As far as I know, the same as they are today. We had everything in those days that they still have today. I think in the high schools they played football a little differently than they do today, as I remember.

Teacher: How was it different?

Frances: Well, when I watch a football game today, you see very little kicking. When I was going to high school, they always kicked the ball. I hardly ever saw them do anything but kick them. Now, whether that was soccer or whether it was what they call football today... But it was an awful lot rougher, I can tell you that, too, in our day.

Teacher: How was it rougher?

Frances: Well, there were some classes that couldn't be rough, there were some schools, I should say that couldn't be out of school, and they'd get so mad that they'd... The boys didn't have masks over their faces in those days, like they have today. They'd come with battle scars, that's what they called them. Their faces would be all scratched up and their arms would be broken, their legs would be broken. One boy I remember, he had a spinal break somewhere that made him a paraplegic the rest of his life. He said that was his battle scar. They seemed to be a lot rougher, some of them. Of course, some of them weren't, but some of them were.

I: When you were a little girl, what kind of toilets did you have?

Teacher: She wants to know about your bathrooms in the early 1900s.

Frances: Well, the tubs sometimes were a little different than they are today, they could be set in, boxed in like, as I remember. Instead of the toilets having the flush box low on them, they were way up on the wall, like that and you pulled a chain to flush it. That was about the only difference. The basin where you washed, they were about the same, some were fancier.

I: What was it like during the Depression?

Teacher: Some of the kids in here have heard their grandparents talking about the Great Depression.

Frances: It was awful. It was awful. There was no work. They would have great, long lines going up to where they could get an apple, or something to eat, or a loaf of bread, or something to eat. This was during the war time, the one you're speaking about. It was terrible. No work. People were starving. I can remember going to the store to get meat and there was nothing left hardly in the meat counters; couldn't buy meat. It was terrible, really.

I: What kinds of things did you learn in school?

Teacher: What were some of the subjects you learned in school?

Frances: We had no computers, nothing like that. As I was telling Louise coming over, we learned arithmetic in the first grade. We actually had fractions by the block system, what we called the block system. There would be little blocks on the table and every room had the blocks up until the eighth grade. There would be a little block here, one inch, it would be a cube. Then there would be one two inches high, then three inches high, and so on up to about six blocks, that would be the first grade. Then they'd have the different shapes of blocks, triangles and so on, and the round cylinders type. Those blocks would be A, B, C, D, as the teacher would call them, and A would equal one-half of B, because B was two times A; it would take two of those blocks to make B. You see what I mean? That was the kind of arithmetic that we started out on. We called it arithmetic, of course, I don't know what you call it today.

Teacher: I think they just call it math today.

Frances: Math, yes, probably. And everything else was, well, I don't know whether it was done as it is today, because I don't know how they teach much today.

Teacher: You learned to read and writing skills, were they important?

Frances: We learned to read and write. Oh, definitely. Everything we had was graded, very, very sharply graded. We'd write a theme or a story or something like that. Everything would be graded. If we had a capital letter missing or a misspelled word or if we had any punctuation

marks missing, it was all graded in red ink. That would knock off your A or B or whatever grades we had.

We had a grade “E”, that was “excellent” and it was better than an A. We’d have A+ or A-, but I don’t know what they do today. Then we’d have a B, which would mean good. A C would be fair. We didn’t have a D. We had a P, which was poor. We had an F, which was failure, you see what I mean? And so on and so on. The grades were a lot different. But our teacher was very strict on our punctuation and capital letters and spelling. Every little thing would be marked. Of course, we learned to read and write in the first grade.

And *writing* [i.e. penmanship] was another thing we were graded on very, very rigidly. We’d have to sit on our paper and hold our pencils or pen, whatever we were writing with, in a certain position. And we’d have to make these O’s and straight lines and so on and just go like that. They called that freehand writing. That was the way my father was taught. We didn’t have a pencil and pinch it like this and we could never get down like this, unless there was something wrong with our eyes. We had to sit up and do it this way. Now that’s the way I was taught.

They were very, very strict in the schools when I was going to school. Not like they are today. We had to march in, march out. Today they run in and they run out.

Teacher to students: Do you see why grandparents sometimes say some of the negative things they do about schools? Any more questions? Are you sure? You’ve asked them all?

I: In clothing, did you wear pants, or just dresses?

Teacher: Were women allowed to wear pants?

Frances: I had a hunch that might come out. Do you mean pants like this?

Students: Yes!

Frances: No!! I didn’t put a pair of pants on probably until about ten years ago. [Laughter.]

Teacher: Even if they went out and worked in gardens and things like that, they wore dresses?

Frances: Well, they’d wear overalls, maybe, something like that, but on the street, no. You’d never see a woman dressed like a man, that’s the way I would put it. And do you know some schools, where children were going, they had uniforms. They’d have to wear white blouses and skirts, blue or black skirts, all of the girls. The boys in those days wore short pants, they didn’t wear long pants until they were sixteen years old. I think I’ve got a picture of that, too, of my brother when he was sixteen, he had his first long pants.

Teacher: That was his first long pants?

Frances: No, that’s still in short pants. That’s the way the boys dressed.

Teacher: The black stockings and the short pants.

Frances: They called them “knickerbockers.” That’s what they wore until they were sixteen. They were not a man yet. I can remember my brother, when he put on his first long pants, he had his birthday, sixteen, Mama got him a pair of long pants. “I’m a man!” he said. [Laughter]

Teacher: I’ll bet you would feel like a man, if you’d worn knickerbockers ever since you were little.

Frances: That was the boys’ style. They were different than what we have today. I think, boys, as soon as they are out of the cradle and learn to walk, they’ve got long pants on.

Teacher: Are you kids about through? I told them that when they take their interview they may end it with a future question. So, Monique would like to ask you a future question? In this way, you give your opinion.

Frances: I was going to say, I don’t know what lies in the future.

Teacher: Yes, but they want to know what people who have seen a lot of the past, what they feel about the future, what they think will happen.

Monique: What recommendations would you make in the future for better living?

Teacher: What kinds of things would you like to see in the future to improve people’s lives? What do you think would improve the way we live?

Frances: Well, I would personally like to see education improved. That would be one thing. I don’t know. I don’t have that much more left to even think about, you know. But I would like to see better education for children than they have today. More like getting back to the way we were taught, you know what I mean?

Teacher: In a more strict environment.

Frances: Yeah. I’d like to see them all learn to be polite, how we were taught in school, as well as at home. We had to address our parents as “Sir” and “Ma’am”. We had to do the same thing, “Sir” and “Mrs.”, but always “Sir” to a man, which was considered polite. Today they just call them anything. They’re rude, in other words, some of the boys. I’d like to see that all improved, where they go back to where we were when we were called ladies and gentlemen. More like a rigid education, like we had.

Teacher to students: How many of your grandparents have made that same statement in one way or another? Raise your hands. Ah, hah! You’re not alone.

Frances: It’s not the teachers’ fault, it’s the fault of the system, this education today, than it was when I went to school. There are so many of you children, when you want to go to college, there are many things you have to learn in college that you just don’t know, you weren’t taught in your grade schools. I read that day in and day out, you might say, the poor system of education that

they have today, rather than what we had. I would like to see that all go back to the way we had to be taught.

Teacher to students: How many of you think that might be a good idea?

Frances: Did they see the bathing suits of the old day?

Teacher: Yes. What did you think of the bathing suits?

Students: Weird.

Frances: And what they have to today? That was a law, I'm telling you. Today they're almost naked when they go in the water. That was a law. Well, any more questions that I might be able to answer?

I: What do you think of the drugs that are going on today?

Teacher: How do you feel about that compared to the way it was when you were their age?

Frances: They probably had drugs in my day. I imagine they had drugs way, way, many hundreds of years ago. But my feeling is: Say *No*, if anybody comes around to offer you something, a pill of any kind, do not take it! Because it will ruin your lives in the long run and it will shortened them, as well.

Teacher: You might not get to be ninety if you do things like that.

Frances: I don't know whether I'm going to reach one hundred or not. I'm on my way!

end



